

New Jersey / Cunningham article

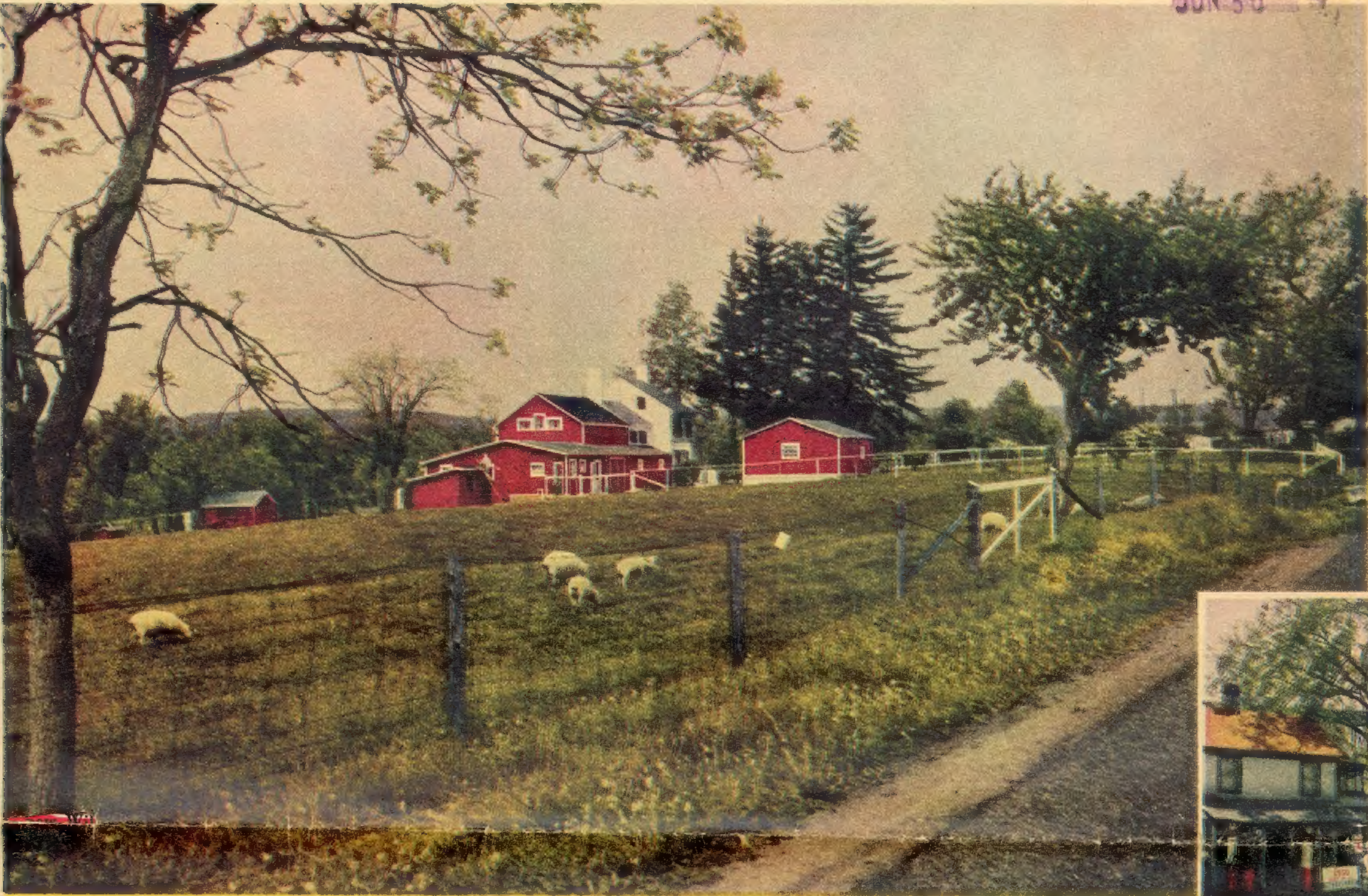
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This is the first of a new series of the popular "Let's Explore" picture-articles for readers of The Newark News. Each week during the Summer an interesting motor trip will be described, using roads that avoid congested highways as much as possible. Special pictorial maps will show each route clearly and photographs will illustrate scenic and historical features.

LET'S EXPLORE

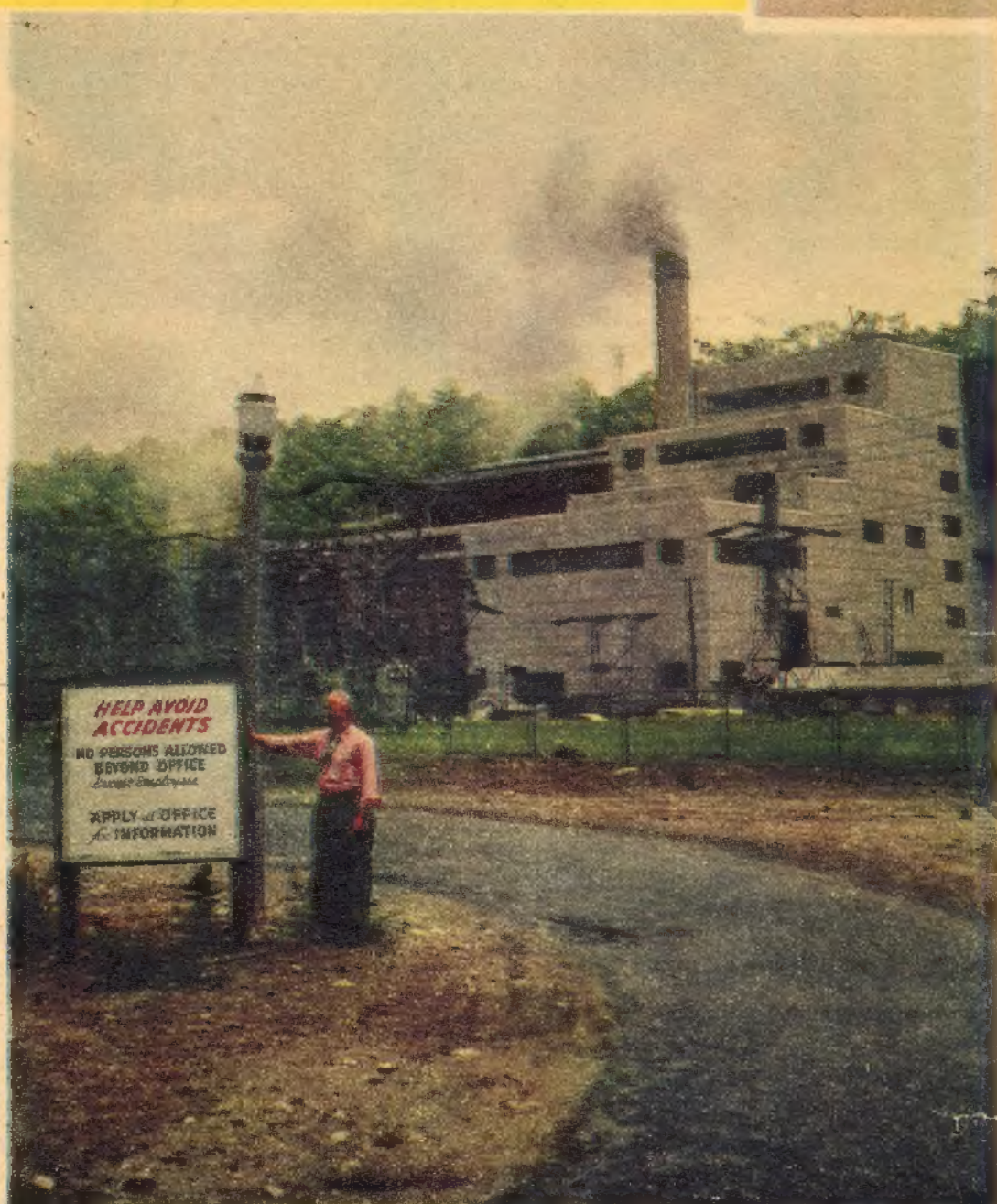
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Above: Farm scene typical of North Hunterdon countryside. Right: The combination general store and post office at Changelwater.



Delaware River and bridge viewed from Riegelsville, N. J., side.



Electricity for area comes from this station in Holland Township.

RE--

**'Hills of Hunterdon' in Western New Jersey
Rich in Mountain Scenery and River Views**

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

THE Musconetcong Mountains—the Hills of Hunterdon—serve well to introduce the motorist to an exploration of the scenic splendors of New Jersey. This part of West Jersey offers no difficult driving spots, and a 60-mile loop can take you through pleasant villages, along some of the state's finest river scenery and over well-paved mountain roads which overlook vast panoramas.

The traveler can feel the sense of welcome which has always been present for those who have ventured up the gentle slopes of the Musconetcongs since the days when Indians gathered in the mountains for their councils. Early colonists learned the slopes encouraged farming and colo-

nial industrialists found the swiftly-flowing Musconetcong River was ideal for mill operation.

Just beyond Clinton Center, a left swing carries out toward the Delaware River in the valley south of the mountains, through the villages of Pittstown, Everittstown and Mt. Pleasant to Milford. This section of Hunterdon County, away from the ocean, attracted colonists early. Twenty years before the Revolution it was a thriving agricultural region. Today it still is dotted with neat farms and well-kept homes.

Colonel Thomas Lowery, who first settled at Frenchtown, was the dominant figure in early Milford his-

(Continued on Page 21)

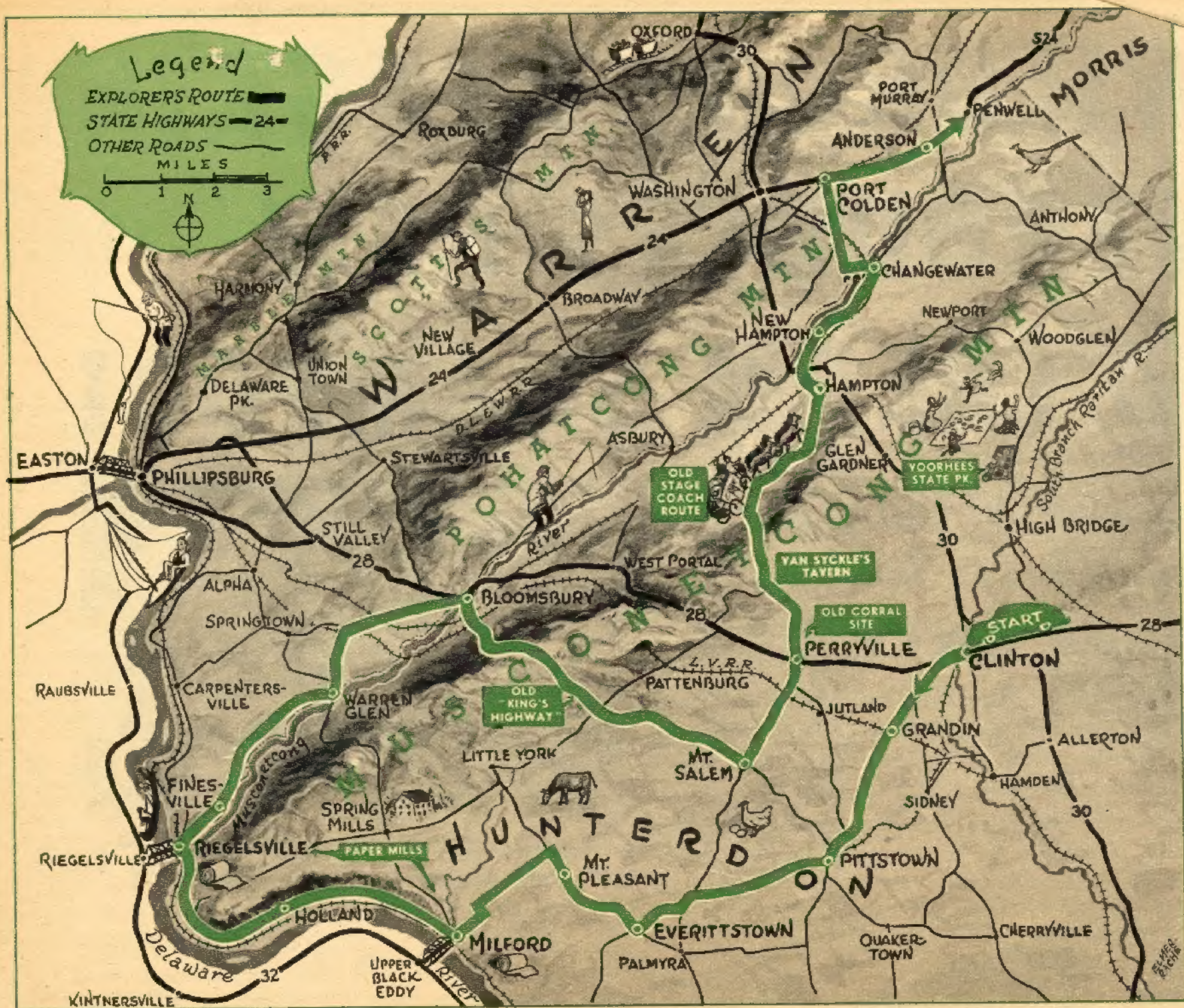
Color photos by Johnston, Corbitt



Waters of the Musconetcong flowing past the bridge at Bloomsbury.



Built in 1797 and still standing is the Old Gibson House. It was formerly known as the Milford Hotel in the "mill town where the river is forded."



(Continued from Page 13)

lory. He built a grist mill, a sawmill and several dwellings, one of which—with extensive alterations—still stands as the former Milford Hotel in the center of town. Milford was first known as Burnt Mills when the sawmill burned down, later as Lowertown and then as Milford when it became known as the "mill town where the river is forded."

BETWEEN Milford and Riegelsville the road closely follows the Delaware River and motorists have an unobstructed view of the natural scenic beauty which has attracted dozens of artists to this section. Many of them now live in the hills above the river. The road is narrow in spots but is in excellent condition. The solid rock cliffs to the right show this route was not easily achieved. Across the river on the Pennsylvania side the mountains rise precipitously, almost clifflike, from the river's edge.

Halfway to Riegelsville the neat electric generating station of the New Jersey Power & Light Co. nestles along the river. Most of the electrical power for a vast section of West Jersey is generated here. Northward, the Musconetcong Mountains rise upward from the Delaware, the first slopes forming "Gravel Hill," where the Indians long ago held their councils. Once this was known as "Indian Fields" and early tradition tells of a great Indian battle

LET'S EXPLORE---Musconetcong Country

which once took place here. It is more likely, however, that skulls found in the fields in the last century mark a burying ground rather than a battlefield.

Riegelsville, birthplace of the important Hunterdon County paper industry, is at the junction of the Musconetcong and Delaware rivers. In 1797 a grist mill was operating on the Musconetcong at this point and 10 years later Benjamin Riegel settled there and founded the great paper industry. Paper-making spread to Milford in 1910 and the company now operates two additional mills along the Musconetcong.

Riegelsville has a counterpart on the Pennsylvania side of the river and the two like-named towns are connected by the bridge. A drive over the bridge offers a splendid view of the Delaware and the motorists will find the Pennsylvania town quietly intriguing.

THE road curves upward from Riegelsville through Finesville and Warren Glen, along the Musconetcong River at the mountain's foot. It touches Route 22 at Bloomsbury, then the busy highway should be left by a right turn into Bloomsbury and up the mountain.

Bloomsbury was known as "Johnston's Iron Works" in 1753 when Samuel Johnston established a furnace to melt

iron ore into "blooms" or pigs. The town probably gets its name from Johnston's product. Several forges were established along the Musconetcong River at about the time of the Revolution but cheaper processing methods elsewhere caused the industry to fade.

According to early histories, the road over the Musconetcong Mountain from Bloomsbury to Pittstown was once part of the old "King's Highway." The old highway was built quickly, the histories say, because there were no streams to cross along the entire distance and the gentle rise of the mountains made the road easy to construct.

THE "gentle rise" is deceptive, however. Drivers will learn that when they come to a hairpin turn where the road doubles back on itself on the grade. At this point a stop offers proof of the height of the mountains. The eye can look out over many miles of countryside. This is one of the finest views in New Jersey. The road still climbs, until at the peak it is nearly 900 feet above sea level, although the mountain scenery is closed in as the road levels off toward Pittstown.

A left turn toward Perryville, is recommended, although the trip home can be shortened by continuing to Pittstown. Perryville, marked by a big red house on the highway, received its name

in honor of Commodore Perry's victory on Lake Erie. The house, then a tavern, was nearing completion when word came of the victory and workmen promptly dubbed the site "Perryville." Once this was an important stop for cattle and sheep men on their way to New York markets. Corrals were provided where thousands of animals

Riding Headquarters

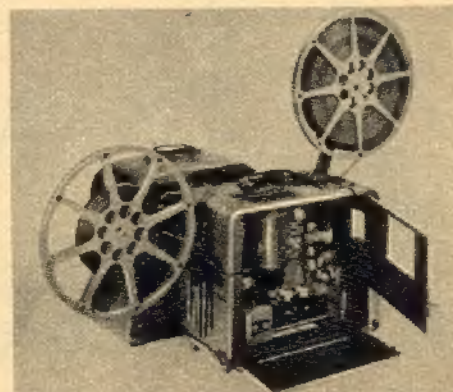
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could be kept overnight while stayed in the tavern.

ACROSS the highway is Van Syckle's Corner, named from the neat stone and wood house which once was Van Syckle's Tavern. A corner-stone bears the date 1763. This was a favorite stopping place for Philadelphia travelers bound for Schooley's Mountain before the Civil War.

Beyond, the trip carries through Hampton, across Route 30 to New Hampton and finally to the highly unique Changewater, where a quiet rural life goes on below a railroad bridge which stretches high above the village.

It's easy to see why artists find Changewater a favorite spot. It is an irresistible combination of the high railroad bridge, the old stone bridge across the Musconetcong River, a burned-out graphite mill, an abandoned snuff factory and the old village store and post office.

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